

Activity 1 The importance of communication

Activity instructions for ambassadors

Background

Nurses and midwives possess a tremendous amount of medical knowledge and clinical expertise. Yet their greatest challenge, and perhaps most vital task, is communication. Nurses and midwives are a central point of communication within healthcare. They convey and interpret information between doctors, other nurses and midwives, therapists, family members and patients. So as a nurse or midwife, having the ability to listen and establish effective communication is essential to providing the best possible care and patient outcomes.

This activity is designed to highlight the importance of listening and communicating clearly, and the potential serious consequences of information getting misunderstood or altered.

The challenge

Students must receive information and deliver it to another person with the fewest alterations.

What you will need

- A folded sheet of paper for each group, with one of the statements below written on it (give each group a different statement)
- A blank piece of paper and a pen for each group

Instructions

- Split the class into groups of 8–10 students and get them to sit in a circle
- Give one student from each group a folded sheet of paper with a statement written on it
- Ask the student with the statement to whisper it in the ear of the person on their right
- The second person then whispers what they have heard in the ear of the person on their right, and so on
- The last person in the circle must write down what they have heard on a blank piece of paper
- Once all the groups are finished, the students who have written the sentences down must read out what they have written
- Compare the sentences to the originals and move on to the discussion points below

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Discussion points

After the students have finished, talk about the activity and how it relates to nursing and midwifery. Areas of discussion could include:

- What did students learn from this activity?
- How accurate were the final sentences? How easy is it to misinterpret or change the meaning of a piece of information?
- In a healthcare setting, effective listening and clear communication are amongst the most important tools we have to ensure we provide the best possible patient care. What could happen without it? (Prompts: lines of communication can be crossed, leading to medical errors, reduced patient experience, poor decisions and increased anxiety.)
- Apart from the words we use, ask students what other things affect how well we communicate? (Prompts: our tone of voice, the attention we give to what the other person is saying, the messages we give out by the way we move and position our bodies and the accuracy and clarity of what we write.)

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Statements:

Below are a selection of different statements for this activity, or alternatively you could write your own.

The language therapist is booked to visit Lucy at home tomorrow. She should arrive around 12pm so can you let her parents, Mr and Mrs Taylor, know

Mrs Patel is booked for knee surgery at 9am; she is nil by mouth including fluids before then

Mr Jones is waiting for ophthalmology to close his eyelid wound. He had a fit and was found at the bottom of the stairs with facial injuries

Miss Watson should speak to the research team promptly before booking a dental appointment for her cracked tooth

Baby Parker can be discharged at midday today as long as he has been seen by the haematologist before then
